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ABSTRACT

An argument is made that new kinds of transnational literature (i.e., literature that is no longer linguistically and/or culturally rooted in national categories only) are rapidly multiplying in the changing geography of the world. It is suggested that for linguists this trend offers new sources of data, new insights into the operation of language across cultural boundaries, and new challenges to develop models for examining cross-cultural literary languages. Examples are cited of the Swedish influence in Finland, the flow of Americanisms into Finland, the appearance of the European Common Market, and the international characteristics of certain films and television. The need to analyze cross-cultural texts from an interdisciplinary approach is also noted. It is concluded that the linguistic and cultural map of the world is now in constant flux and that, in order to bring linguistics into the twenty-first century, linguists should begin looking for new non-prescriptive approaches to describe everyday and literary languages in the process of transnationalization. Contains 4 references. (LB)

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LINGUISTICS AND THE TRANSNATIONALISATION OF LITERATURE

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The present article is a discussion of the main points of a workshop in the Seminar on Cross-cultural Communication. It argues that new kinds of transnational literatures - ie. literatures that are no longer linguistically and/or culturally rooted in national categories only - are rapidly multiplying in the changing cultural geography of the world, and that for linguists this can offer new sources of interesting data, new insights into the operation of language across cultural boundaries, and new challenges of developing models with which to examine cross-cultural literary languages.

At the moment there is a lively debate going on in the pages of *Helsingin Sanomat* about the role of Swedish in Finnish society, and about the motivation to teach Swedish to all Finnish school children. This is an old debate re-ignited again, and it raises familiar questions about the position and nature of Finnish national culture as opposed to the Other, be it Swedish, American, or European. One reader describes the present linguistic situation in Finland in his letter (*HeSa* 20.9.1990) as follows:

> To my mind the most important thing in the present situation is not the status of Swedish in Finland, but the status of the Finnish language and culture in the world. With this speed we will soon have nothing to defend, considering the fast speed with which American culture, in the form of the English language, is now penetrating our lives. ... Dear people. Do not let English invade your minds! (transl.)

The writer paints a picture of an alien linguistic influence, which, like a modern vulgar Tempter, invades first Finnish culture, then people's everyday lives, and eventually their minds with worthless linguistic bric-a-brac, which is somehow equated with American culture. It is interesting that he uses the words *penetrate* ('tunkeutua') and *invade* ('valloittaa'), when referring to the influence of American culture, against which the Finnish culture has to defend itself. Or herself, rather, for these sexual and violent allusions are quite obvious. Here is,

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once again, the "Maiden Finland" gripping the Finnish constitution (or, in this case, Finnish national culture) in the storm, protecting it from the evil attacks of foreign influence. The myth of the Other as the Invader is still alive and well.

These kinds of fears are in no way typical of only the Finnish climate, though. All over Europe, the same worries abound. The European Single Market, the English speaking satellite broadcasting, the Americanisation of popular culture, all these seem to have shaken the basis of European national identities, calling forth both pessimism and fears. In an interesting article in the *Screen* magazine Morley and Robins (1990:12) discuss the processes through which cultural identities are produced and consumed in what they refer to as the postmodern European geography, where new transnational communication spheres, markets and communities have been, and will increasingly be created. They point out that "it is broadly felt that these new technologies - satellite broadcasting, for instance - have disturbing and damaging implications for established national (and indeed continental) identities". They call this the "Fortress Europe" mentality, which basically is a reactionary attempt to sustain and defend a sense of European identity against American linguistic and cultural infiltration.

The Finnish national myth of "Maiden Finland" thus seems to have its European counterparts, and all of them, including the coming European one, are prepared to defend themselves against the effects of "cocacolonisation".

So, on the one hand, protectionist and nationalistic reactions against transnational and/or American cultural imperialism have arisen; on the other hand, the changing cultural geography of Europe also means, of course, a certain widening of perspectives, and of a lowering of cultural barriers. And this, to my mind, is becoming apparent, not only in Finnish popular culture, as noted in the reader's letter above, but also in literature and art.

Take the Kaurismäki brothers, for example. Their films are no longer strictly speaking "Finnish", their settings, characters, topics, and, most interestingly, their language is not Finnish (only). These young film makers now operate on a more European, even global arena, and their film texts are transnational both in terms of their linguistic and cultural characteristics. Or, take Rosa Liksom, who writes in Finnish, but varies her dialects, sociolects and registers, her settings (Lapland, Helsinki, Moscow, Berlin...), characters and themes in a way

which is clearly in a sharp contrast with Finnish mainstream literature. Also her texts cross national boundaries of culture, as well as intra-national boundaries of what are sometimes referred to as sub-cultures.

At the same time, traditional Finnish literature, the realistic, epic tradition, in particular, has come to a standstill: the familiar, almost institutionalized forms of telling stories are repeated, with not many signs of reaching over the boundaries of Finnish (and mostly agrarian) culture. Both in terms of new literary forms and contents our epic literature is thus still very much hermetically Finnish. Much to our fortune, this is not the whole picture: outside the dignified epic tradition new windows are being opened, and fresh air is beginning to be let into the musty rooms of our literature.

New types of literary texts represent new challenges for researchers of culture, literature and language. For linguists, the rise of literary texts no longer rooted in national cultures only opens up rich new sources of data, and new camera angles to examine this data. Linguistically, these types of texts are very often heteroglossic in nature; in other words, they are mixtures of various ingredients, of different languages, dialects, sociolects, registers and styles. In this sense they could also be seen as post-modern texts, texts that decenter the old institutionalised languages and worlds of literature, and suggest new, previously marginalised ones.

For illustration, recently I heard a perfect example of such a transnational and post-modern text on the radio: this was an episode of the Finnish *Kalevala*, reinterpreted and presented as an episode of *Dallas*. The Dallas effect was achieved by prefacing the drama with the well-known Dallas melody, and by presenting the old Väinämöinens, Lemminkäinens and all the rest as plotting and busying themselves with complicated and mischievous plans, businesses and conspiracies very much in the way the famous Ewings are portrayed in their own mythical world of oil and money. The story was mostly in Finnish, containing bits and pieces of *Kalevala*, mixed with modern Finnish; it also included some English, such as American-TV-series-like slogans "The story of *Kalevala*" and comments, "just like in Dallas". It was certainly funny, and also very interesting as a text which tried to create an ironic and humorous frame around the national monument of *Kalevala*.

It may even be, as Mary Louise Pratt (1987) has pointed out, that the emergence of such transnational literary texts involves a shift in the definition of linguistics. She suggests that what this calls for is a linguistics of contact, as opposed to the mainstream tradition of linguistics of community. By her term linguistics of contact Pratt (1987:60) refers to a linguistics which places "at its centre the operation of language across lines of social differentiation", a linguistics that focuses "on modes and zones of contact between dominant and dominated groups, between persons of different and multiple identities, speakers of different languages", that focuses on "how such speakers constitute each other relationally and in difference, how they enact differences in language". Such a linguistics would no longer attempt to describe and analyse linguistic communities, which, Pratt argues (1987:57), are traditionally seen as homogeneous and self-contained wholes and not in their relations and interactions with each other. In Pratt's view (1987:59) it is indeed symptomatic in linguistics of community to postulate social subgroups existing separately, but not the relationality of social differentiation.

In the changing world, this seems certainly very promising as an approach towards language, and towards languages of literature. For, how can you examine languages of contact, or culturally/linguistically polyphonic literary texts, with a model which assumes the existence of a norm, or a code, which is, or should be, shared by everyone? What happens if speakers or texts have different norms, use different languages and imply different cultural backgrounds? It seems reasonable to argue that then, in such interactions and/or literary texts, you need a model which takes into account their multiple and complex linguistic and cultural dimensions.

This could be a challenge to linguists and literary critics in another way, too - as is again pointed out by Pratt (1987:63) - for they have to be trained in the reception of texts not anchored in national categories. In my opinion, this means that it is time for researchers interested in the quickly multiplying number of transnational literary texts, to step out of their own narrow disciplinary pidgeon holes, and start looking for new connections between fields of research previously kept apart. In other words,the analysis of transnational - or "cross-cultural", in the sense Kachru (1987:87), for example, refers to them - literary texts requires an interdisciplinary approach, an approach which turns to pragmatics, cross-cultural studies, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics,

ethnography, cultural studies, comparative literature and history, at least, to fill in the gaps the linguistics of community, with which all we are familiar with, is unable to fill.[1]

In my view, it is only through a recognition that the linguistic and cultural map of the world is now in a constant flux and that we as linguists should start looking for new non-prescriptive approaches to describe everyday and literary languages in the process of transnationalisation, that we can bring linguistics into the 21st century. For example, in the case of the flow of Americanisms into Finland this means that we might want to ask, instead of moralistically and fearfully condemning them as bad, and of sticking to the established norms and values of our linguistic and cultural community, why there is a need for Americanisms, what they communicate to us as Finns, and what we communicate to each other and to the rest of the world by using them? We might want to look, in other words, how we, instead of being invaded by American language and culture, interact with them, in speech as well as in writing, and what implications rise from this interaction. In this way, we could see Finnish culture, not as an object, or as the helpless virgin at the mercy of the ruthless attacks of the Invader, but as a subject, as a grown-up, who is aware of its own powers and value, but who is, at the same time, open to change, and more mature to deal with the controversies and conflicts which usually accompany major cultural changes. Only through a linguistics of contact we as linguists can keep up with the world where contact across national boundaries is becoming, paradoxically, a new norm.

[1] Something in this line has actually been started in Finland. In Åbo Akademi there is a research project of Literary Pragmatics which attempts, among other things, to examine the reception of literary texts by readers from different cultures.

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